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Chairman: Mr. Asadi ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)
later: Mr. Prendergast (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Jamaica)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development (A/53/25, A/53/72-S/1998/156, A/53/95-S/1998/311, A/53/96, A/53/156-S/1998/78, A/53/165-S/1998/601, A/53/371-S/1998/848, A/53/416, A/53/425, A/53/487)

(b) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (A/53/449)

(c) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/53/65-E/1998/5, A/53/358)

(d) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/53/451)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (A/53/516)

1. **Mr. Zammit-Cutajar** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), introducing the note by the Secretary-General (A/53/449), said that the most significant outcome of the third session of the Conference of the Parties had been the Kyoto Protocol, which was as much an economic instrument as an environmental one. The fact that the next session would be held in a developing country, Argentina, underlined the global nature of the climate change problem. The outcomes of that session would be more in the form of action plans, and firm deadlines for action on the part of the Parties. The agenda reflected the concern of Governments to achieve a balance between Convention issues and Protocol issues. One point on which there was a very clear difference of views, was the question of whether and how to debate the future development of commitments under the Convention.

2. The review of the administrative arrangements that linked the Framework Convention on Climate Change and its secretariat to the United Nations proper would be conducted by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session and by the Conference of the Parties. However, it had been agreed that administrative responsibilities should be shifted increasingly from Geneva to Bonn.

3. **Mr. Johnston** (Convention on Biological Diversity), introducing the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/451, said that in his view, the Convention's effectiveness basically depended on its being able to generate sound scientific information for use by planners and decision makers. Developing scientific understanding of biodiversity and the human relationship with biodiversity was necessary to preventing the adverse impact that human activities had on biodiversity. The Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) had developed into a leading source of scientific advice on biodiversity. The secretariat had received over 100 national biodiversity reports, which represented the most significant source of information on biodiversity at the international level. The Convention therefore had a significant contribution to make to the deliberations within the United Nations on those matters.

4. **Mr. Diallo** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, (A/53/516), said that to date 143 countries from all regions of the world as well as regional economic integration organizations, including the European Union, had ratified or acceded to the Convention. The organization in Recife, Brazil, of the first forum between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean on the implementation of the Convention, with the financial support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Governments of France, Germany and Spain, demonstrated that the Convention was increasingly at the heart of the environmental concerns of the various States Parties.

5. One of the main issues on the agenda of the second session of the Conference of the Parties was the operationalization of the Global Mechanism. The Conference would be invited to endorse the text of the Memorandum of Agreement with IFAD on the modalities and administrative operations for the Global Mechanism. He thanked all the countries and international organizations that had responded to the Secretary-General's appeal for voluntary contributions to the trust funds established for the participation of developing countries in the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and in support of the Secretariat's activities, and paid special tribute to the Government of Japan for its contribution of $1,800,000 for 1998.

6. **Mr. Dengo** (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on plans and projects for the sustainable development of the small island developing States implemented, under implementation or envisaged for the period of 1999–2003 by bilateral donors, United Nations organizations and regional and non-United Nations international organizations (A/53/358), said that, the information it provided was helpful in assessing the responsiveness of the international

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community to the Programme of Action for such countries and seemed to suggest an increase in projects since 1994. However, since only sketchy information had been made available by respondents regarding projects to be implemented in the coming five years, it was premature to judge whether that increase would be sustained. Those donor agencies that had not provided inputs, or that wished to update their inputs, should do so prior to the donors' conference.

7. **Mr. Wibisono** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the signing of the Kyoto Protocol by over 50 States. While the Kyoto session was widely seen as a significant first step towards limiting the unbridled growth in greenhouse gas emissions, there were numerous scientific, technical and economic uncertainties about the new mechanisms and their implications. One basic concern was that they moved essential domestic action off shore. It was therefore important not only to develop agreed international standards for monitoring and verification but, above all, to determine a non-compliance regime pursuant to article 18 of the Protocol.

8. In the view of the Group of 77 and China, the activities to be undertaken by Annex 1 Parties under the new mechanisms should be supplementary to domestic actions. Early and committed action by the developed countries was critical and fundamental, since they were the countries historically responsible for the problem and currently had the capacities to produce effective results. It was unfair and unacceptable that the developing countries, which were struggling to attain decent standards of living, should be asked to curtail their industrial activity and share in the efforts to reduce emissions so that the industrialized countries could continue with their unsustainable production and consumption patterns. In accordance with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, developed countries must take the lead and not merely reduce emissions, but also modify their production and consumption patterns.

9. The Group of 77 and China reiterated the importance of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and appealed to the international community to participate actively in the activities planned for 1999, including the donor conference and the special session of the General Assembly on small island developing States. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/358, the Group welcomed the positive developments in some of the priority areas of concern, in particular the action by the United Nations in support of the system-wide implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and endorsed the conclusions contained in paragraphs 23 to 26. Small island States had been and were making considerable and strenuous efforts at the national and regional levels. Unfortunately, those endeavours were not being adequately complemented by the international community in line with commitments undertaken under the global conference to operationalize and implement the Programme of Action. The bilateral and multilateral donor community must provide adequate financial resources and technical assistance to enable the small island developing States to address their special socio-economic development constraints more effectively.

10. Turning to the Convention on Biological Diversity, he said that it was gratifying to note that the Parties had been carrying out their work programme on agricultural biodiversity in close cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Convention was an important instrument for translating international commitments into national action, but for that to happen resources had to be increased so that the needs of the developing countries could be addressed more adequately. The Group of 77 and China therefore urged donors to make adequate financial resources available through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and through other sources, including bilateral sources.

11. The countries affected by serious drought and desertification were giving priority to restoring and protecting their national and global environments, but the eradication of poverty was still the key strategy for combating desertification and achieving sustainable development. The Group of 77 and China hoped that the Global Mechanism would successfully mobilize resources and channel them to the developing countries, particularly to those in Africa. It appealed to all countries to agree to the establishment of a committee on the review of the implementation of the Convention, and reiterated the appeal made by the Conference of Parties to the developed countries, the multilateral and bilateral financial institutions and the private sector to make voluntary contributions to the Global Mechanism.

12. With only a few days before the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Group of 77 and China considered that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities clearly agreed upon at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and in Agenda 21 should be fully applied, and the sessions should not be distracted by issues extraneous to the letter and spirit of the two Conventions.

13. **Mr. Biaou** (Benin), speaking as Chairman of the African Group on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, said that there was only one African State which had yet to ratify the Convention, and all were drawing up national programmes of action. They were confident that once they had adopted national, subregional and regional programmes of action, partnership agreements would be concluded with the developed countries, the financial institutions and the private sector. At the same time as drawing up their national programmes of action, they were taking steps to establish national funds for combating desertification.

14. In each of the five subregions steps were being taken to establish a facilitation fund to finance the elaboration and implementation of the respective subregional programme of action.

15. At the regional level, the process of elaborating a regional programme of action for Africa had been initiated in 1998 with the holding of regional workshops to build its basic structure of seven networks. A regional coordination unit would be operational by 1 January 1999 at the latest, and in parallel with it would be a regional facilitation fund.

16. At the interregional level, there was now a forum on implementation of the Convention linking the countries of Africa with those of Latin America and the Caribbean, which had produced a six-point platform for cooperation.

17. At the international level, since African countries were fulfilling their obligations and undertakings, they also expected their bilateral and multilateral partners to do the same by strengthening their financial support. He noted that in June 1998, the Organization of African Unity had offered US$ 300,000 to finance implementation of the Convention at the regional level. It was hoped that that would encourage development partners to continue with their support in terms of financial contributions.

18. **Mr. Cordeiro** (Brazil) said that, based on the misleading argument that the effectiveness of international efforts to address the issue of climate change would depend on the "meaningful participation and engagement by key developing countries", attempts were once again being made to revive the proposal to establish "voluntary commitments" to reduce emissions by developing countries. The most conspicuous of the many false assumptions lying behind that proposal was that developed countries were taking the lead in fulfilling the objectives of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the implication that developing countries were not contributing their share. Nothing could be further from the truth.

19. As a result of a series of fiscal, industrial and technological policies, along with specific programmes for energy efficiency and conservation, Brazil had not only significantly reduced its rate of deforestation but had also reduced its levels of carbon dioxide emissions, which on a per capita basis were no more than 0.3 tons of carbon per year. That compared with 5 tons in the United States of America, 4.3 tons in the Russian Federation, 3 tons in Japan and 2.5 tons in Europe. In terms of Gross Domestic Product, Brazil's carbon dioxide emissions did not exceed 0.05 tons of carbon per US dollar of output, which was one fifth of the United States figure and one third of that for Europe and Japan.

20. With the approach of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties it was hoped that a clear indication would emerge as to whether annex I countries would live up to their commitments and effectively take the lead in international efforts to address climate change or whether they would continue to lag behind in those efforts. The clean development mechanism should be given precedence over emission trading and joint implementation among annex I countries. It would allow non-annex I countries to benefit from project activities and at the same time introduce an element of flexibility that would help annex I countries to achieve their reduction targets. It also had the potential to enhance the contribution by non-annex I countries in reducing global warming in a manner consistent with the Convention and also advantageous to all parties. Its success would very much depend on the prior establishment by the annex I countries of strict national regulations limiting their emissions, and on the establishment of a strict set of rules penalizing non-compliance with the emission targets agreed at Kyoto. Credits under the clean development mechanism should accrue only to annex I countries that were capable of demonstrating significant reductions in domestic emissions. Emission reduction targets for annex I countries should be based not on purely political compromise but on objective technical and scientific criteria relating historical emissions to their measured effect in terms of global warming.

21. Brazil attached the highest importance to implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. Recent studies had shown that land degradation affected approximately 11 per cent of its national territory, and mostly in an area which was home to the largest and poorest rural population. Desertification in Brazil caused estimated economic losses of US$ 300 million per year, and it had been established that the cost of reclaiming the affected regions would be close to US$ 3.8 billion. The Brazilian Government was firmly committed to

implementation of its national plan to combat desertification and drought and of the Latin American and Caribbean annex to the Convention. Brazil had offered to host the third session of the Conference of the Parties in August 1999.

22. **Mr. Isakov** (Russian Federation) said that his country was interested in a constructive solution of the problem of global climate change, and was committed to the course set by the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session. The Russian Federation continued to meet in full its obligations under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and had considerably reduced its level of emission of greenhouse gases as compared with 1990. His Government was working on issues related to ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, and believed that an efficient and fair international system of greenhouse gas emission quotas trading should not impede the sustainable economic development of States parties but should be based on voluntary principles. It should stipulate the parties' right to choose between accumulating unused emission quotas to be realized in the future and using them for trading and attracting foreign investments.

23. Turning to the Convention on Biological Diversity, he welcomed the fact that attention was being paid to the important issue of access to genetic resources and the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems. It was to be hoped that the draft protocol on biological safety would be adopted. The Russian Federation had stepped up its efforts to preserve biological diversity, improving its legal framework and expanding its system of protected areas and conservation of endangered species. However, there remained a fairly large number of problems, chiefly related to the unfavourable financial and economic situation in his country.

24. His delegation reaffirmed its principled interest in accession to the Convention to Combat Desertification and expected that the interests of Central and Eastern Europe would be taken into account and reflected in the additional annex to the Convention. It was ready to cooperate with all the Parties to the Convention in that regard, and was also ready for constructive cooperation within the framework of the Convention.

25. Turning finally to the problem of sustainable development of small island developing States, he pointed to the need to complete work on the vulnerability index for them and to ensure that it was duly taken into account when drawing up the policy of their sustainable development.

26. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said it was necessary to ensure policy coherence and synergy among the various legally binding conventions and protocols concerning the environment in order to advance their effective implementation. Although the Conferences of the Parties were autonomous bodies, they should be encouraged to take advantage of the benefits that could result from better coordination. Norway supported UNEP's central role in following up the relevant recommendations, and considered that the General Assembly could play a useful role which should be further elaborated.

27. He said that the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change should result in tangible progress in clarifying principles, rules and guidelines to facilitate the ratification process, including the necessary work on operational elements of the flexibility mechanisms in a way which ensured cost-effective limitation of gas emissions in accordance with the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol. In that regard, it was important that the session finalize as much as possible of the remaining work and establish a clear timetable for tasks which required more time.

28. Turning to the Convention to Combat Desertification, he said that land degradation and food insecurity were first of all problems of poverty, which was frequently a result of a lack of power and control over resources. The Convention's participatory approach was therefore vital. Norway recognized that the poorest and most seriously affected countries, particularly in Africa, would continue to need international assistance in order effectively to combat desertification: more than 50 per cent of Norway's bilateral assistance and a substantial part of its multilateral assistance was already allocated to sub-Saharan Africa.

29. The fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity had made good progress in advancing implementation of the provisions with regard to sector-specific work programmes and cross-cutting issues. Norway attached great importance to a successful conclusion of the negotiations on a protocol on biosafety.

30. Much remained to be done to implement the ambitious Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; insufficient resources, as well as the El Niño phenomenon, had contributed to making its full implementation more difficult. Norway intended to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the El Niño phenomenon.

31. **Mr. Boucher** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the 32 States of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said that with the adoption of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the international community had affirmed its determination to protect the global climate. There was strong scientific evidence that such interference was already at high and even dangerous levels. The Alliance had

repeatedly stressed the dangers its members faced as a consequence of climate change, the most immediate being sea level rise, which had already resulted in shore erosion and saline infiltration of freshwater sources in almost every region. In addition, devastating hurricanes had rampaged through the Caribbean, wiping out in a matter of hours economic development which had taken some countries years to achieve.

32. The Alliance had expected that the developed countries in particular would move ahead quickly with the necessary domestic actions or "no regrets" measures recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Steps to improve efficiency in the use of fossil fuels and develop alternative sources of energy would constitute a good beginning. However, there was resistance even to such a modest approach to reducing waste of natural resources. He viewed with concern the entrenched behaviours in certain quarters which continued to cling to short-term gains and worked to undermine the Convention to the detriment of all.

33. The Kyoto Protocol was an important first step in forging alliances to foster international consensus on needed actions. However, the emission reduction targets it set were completely inadequate; the developed countries could and must do more. At the forthcoming Conference of the Parties, efforts must be made to ensure that the Kyoto Protocol was not watered down. Stepping up the pace of implementation of the Protocol was a matter of priority.

34. As preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to review the Barbados Programme of Action were under way, Alliance members were particularly worried by the current assessment that overall trends with respect to sustainable development were worse than they had been in 1992. It sometimes appeared that the spirit of Rio had virtually disappeared. Since the Rio Conference, the rapid pace of globalization and liberalization had further underscored the vulnerability of small island developing States. The seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would serve as the preparatory committee for the special session and would conduct a comprehensive review of the Barbados Programme of Action. Its focus on ecotourism and oceans would underline two critical pillars for economic development of small island developing States.

35. Alliance members felt that their concern with the challenge posed by vulnerability for their sustainable development was better understood than previously and they welcomed the growing interest in the work on an applicable vulnerability index as an important tool in the analysis of national policies. Members of the Alliance believed in the continued relevance of the Barbados Programme of Action; the forthcoming special session could provide the necessary impetus and support to revitalize that programme and ensure that their goal of sustainable development would become a reality.

36. **Ms. Wensley** (Australia) said that the international community continued to make important advances in creating institutional mechanisms to deal with major challenges facing the global environment. Its work was made all the more significant through the great progress many countries themselves had achieved in working towards sustainable development on a national and regional basis.

37. Referring to some of the forthcoming key international environment meetings, she said that the fourth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change represented an important opportunity to advance the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. The flexibility mechanisms provided for were a vital means of ensuring that emissions commitments were implemented at the least possible cost. Devising mechanisms that provided for the most cost-effective outcomes would be critical to the Protocol's success. Another issue central to longer term goals was an effective global response to climate change. Commitments by developed countries would not be sufficient to achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention. It was not a question of evading or avoiding obligations or commitments, it was simply a fact.

38. She paid tribute to the tireless efforts by the Executive Secretary in implementing the Convention to Combat Desertification and looked forward to the positive results of the forthcoming Conference of the Parties in Dakar. The final negotiating session for a biosafety protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity would deal with the transboundary movement of living genetically modified organisms and their potential effects on biological diversity. It was essential, that the Protocol should deal only with their transboundary movement without attempting to dictate to Parties their domestic management of such organisms. Its procedures must be consistent with multilateral trading rules that had been developed over many years. A workable protocol that assisted Parties to protect their biological diversity while not imposing restrictions on international trade would promote confidence in and shared knowledge of biotechnology and living genetically modified organisms.

39. Australia had continued to support the implementation of the outcomes of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and had been closely involved in efforts to further the Barbados Programme of Action in the South Pacific, including through

support for the continuing development of the Global Ocean Observing System. It welcomed the opportunity to support preparations for the special session.

40. Her delegation welcomed the report of the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. The report of the Secretary-General on ways and means of undertaking the review of progress made in implementing conventions related to sustainable development (A/53/477) would require careful reflection on the desirability and means of achieving better linkages between the various conventions dealing with global, but distinct, environmental issues.

41. Finally, the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would consider many things of particular interest to Australia, including oceans, small island developing States and tourism. One of the challenges it would face would be how to establish linkages between those themes. In conclusion, her delegation fully supported the proposal that the Committee should consider the environment conventions in a single omnibus resolution.

42. **Mr. Kebede** (Ethiopia) said that, despite the commitments undertaken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and despite energetic institutional reform, progress had been slow and could not keep pace with new challenges. The international community, therefore, needed to develop additional mechanisms to establish coherent links among existing international environmental conventions.

43. Among the issues which had been considered at that Conference had been the need to conserve biological diversity. Scientific opinion was united in its view that humanity was in the process of squandering an incalculably important resource central to food, health and economic activity. His delegation shared that concern, and was surprised to find that decisions regarding intellectual property rights had major implications for food security, agricultural and rural development and conservation of the environment. The Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, which defined only the protection of inventions, had formalized the trend to confer private or individual and exclusive rights to intellectual property, while the Convention on Biological Diversity recognized the role of local and indigenous communities in the conservation of biological diversity and considered biological resources as collective property.

44. More than two thirds of all plant species originated in developing countries, and at least 35,000 of them had potential medicinal value. Some of the most commercially attractive enterprises in the international market – pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, seeds and biotechnology – were to a large degree based on biological resources from the South. Yet those materials were often not paid for, being simply gathered and taken away by those with the necessary knowledge. It was ironic that the packages of patented and manipulated biological resources were being sold back to the place of origin as private and exclusive property. There was a widely recognized inequality in the transfer of biological resources between the developed North and the developing South. From that perspective, his delegation placed great importance on the need to protect the rights of communities to enjoy the fruits of their labour and to benefit from the use of the biological resources they nurtured and from their communal knowledge. The Organization of African Unity, in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Authority of Ethiopia, had organized a workshop on community rights and access to biological resources, and he hoped that the recommendations of that workshop would be given due attention and would be taken into account during the forthcoming renegotiation process of the TRIPS agreement.

45. Turning to the issue of environmental degradation in Ethiopia, he said that changes in climatic patterns coupled with anthropogenic calamities had made almost 73 per cent of the land in Ethiopia vulnerable to drought and desertification. Accordingly, environmental issues and sustainable development were at the top of its development agenda and it had prepared a national conservation strategy, an environmental policy and a land use and forestry action plan.

46. Finally, the dream of transforming the outcomes of Rio into effective action would not come true unless sufficient resources were mobilized. Without international collaboration and support, success in the area of environmental protection would be impossible.

47. **Mr. Shihab** (Maldives) said that his delegation attached great importance to the forthcoming special session to review the Barbados Programme of Action and he hoped that the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which would, in effect, serve as the preparatory committee for the special session, would incorporate the outcome of the forthcoming meeting between the small island developing States and prospective donors into the documentation of the special session. His delegation also attached great importance to the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the opportunity to negotiate on several new mechanisms established under the Kyoto Protocol.

48. With regard to the question of vulnerability, given the immensity of the potential threat to small island developing

States such as the Maldives, his delegation stressed the need for an economic and ecological vulnerability index in order to reflect greater reality and balance in the criteria for the designation of least developed countries. It welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on that subject (A/53/65), which outlined the extensive work already undertaken by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

49. For the Maldives, given the scientific proof of global warming, sea level rise and ozone depletion, the threat of extinction were very real. Those on the front lines would have to take the lead in the debate, as it would be the smallest and weakest that would be hit first, followed by the rest of the world. There would be no winners.

50. **Mr. Malkani** (India) noted that some developed countries were not only depleting natural resources but also exporting their dirty industries and harmful chemicals that were banned in their own countries to the poorer countries. The special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 had recognized that considerable progress had been made at the national level. Many developing countries had set up, at considerable cost to themselves, local versions of Agenda 21. India had elaborated a national conservation strategy and policy statement on environment and development, a national forestry policy and a policy statement on the abatement of pollution. A national action plan for the conservation of biodiversity was currently being debated in Parliament. A broad-based participatory approach, involving all sectors of society and recognizing the crucial role of women, had been taken in developing the national policy on environment. An Environment Authority had been established in order to ensure the transparency of environmental measures and there were plans to create a national mechanism to deal with accidents in connection with the handling of hazardous substances. His delegation was therefore deeply concerned that industrialized countries had not fulfilled their commitments under Agenda 21 and were even attempting to erode the partnership forged at the Rio Conference, particularly the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, by seeking to impose additional obligations on the developing countries.

51. India would participate actively in the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He wished to reiterate that, at their recent meeting in Durban, the Movement of Non-aligned Countries had appealed to developed countries to take action at the domestic level to implement their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. Emissions trading for the implementation of those commitments could not commence until agreement had been reached on the principles and modalities of such trading, including the initial allocation of emissions entitlements to all countries on an equitable basis. He also reiterated the urgent need for immediate action to provide developing countries with the necessary financial and technological resources and environmentally sound technology in order to enable them to fulfil their commitments under the Framework Convention.

52. India would also be participating actively in the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. One issue that must be addressed urgently was the development of proprietary patents based on biodiversity and the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities without the prior informed consent of, or any arrangements to share the benefits with, the developing countries that were the repositories of such biodiversity and knowledge. Effective protection must be guaranteed to indigenous biotechnology, developed over the millennia.

53. Turning to the issue of coherence between the various environmental Conventions, he said that many of the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/477) required detailed examination. The report raised a number of questions, including questions about the interrelationship between the Commission on Sustainable Development and UNEP. In his delegation's view, the distinctive role played by the Commission and the General Assembly in facilitating holistic consideration of environmental issues and mainstreaming socio-economic concerns should not be overlooked.

54. **Mr. Drayton** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that they attached great importance to the full implementation of the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action and felt that it was regrettable that relatively few of the projects listed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/358) had been successfully implemented. In many cases projects were discontinued after the donor-funded phase owing to a lack of capacity-building at the national and regional levels. At the national level, that could be attributed to limited human resources; project-driven development, resulting in an overly sectoral approach; and a lack of cooperation from the private sector. At the regional level the obstacles included the lack of an integrated approach to project and programme planning, which often resulted in the insufficient mobilization and utilization of resources; the absence of effective information-sharing mechanisms; institutional weaknesses; and limited human and financial resources.

55. In response to those deficiencies, the Community had adopted a declaration in 1997, according top priority to human resource development and stressing the importance of regional institutions and mechanisms. The recent Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action had recognized that the establishment of a permanent regional implementation mechanism was crucial to project execution. While recognizing that the small island developing States bore primary responsibility for the implementation of the Programme of Action, a favourable international economic environment and the continued support of development partners were vital. In that connection, she noted that, at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, the international community had reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and acknowledged that national and regional efforts must be supplemented by external assistance, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, capacity-building and the transfer of environmentally sound technology. The Community therefore attached great importance to the forthcoming donors' conference to be held in February 1999 for which it was compiling project portfolios.

56. The Community welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the development of a vulnerability index for small island developing States (A/53/65) and noted, in particular, the findings of the ad hoc expert group. It was pleased that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Commonwealth Secretariat had agreed to work together to support a task force for the study of the special circumstances confronting very small economies with a view to formulating a universally acceptable vulnerability index and hoped that the upcoming special session of the General Assembly would witness further progress to that end.

57. The Community was working, both on its own and with its development partners, to provide input to the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in preparation for that special session. It hoped that the Commission's deliberations on a number of issues of particular relevance to small island developing States, including oceans and seas, sustainable tourism and consumption and production and consumption patterns, would lead to specific outcomes.

58. **Mr. Hili** (Malta) called for a stronger political commitment by all countries and greater cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system to halt the degradation of the world's natural resource base. As a small island State, Malta attached great importance to the Agenda for Development, which highlighted the particular circumstances of small island developing States and the need for international support for their development. His delegation looked forward to the work of the special session of the General Assembly to review the Barbados Programme of Action. It was continuing its own work on the formulation of the vulnerability index for small island developing States, which it considered vital. In the meantime, the transfer of technology and human resource development were issues of pressing concern to such States.

59. Noting that his delegation had first proposed consideration of the issue of climate change by the United Nations, he urged the international community to accelerate the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol with a view to taking an integrated approach to the stabilization of greenhouse gas levels. Noting that Malta had been among the first signatories of the Kyoto Protocol he invited all States that had not yet done so to accede to it. Of course the Clean Development Mechanism developed under the Kyoto Protocol would not be sufficient to reverse the harmful effects of climate change; the main polluters must take action to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. His delegation hoped that the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties would bring significant progress to that end.

60. His delegation attached particular importance to the Mediterranean Action Plan coordinated by UNEP. Malta was host to the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea and a member of the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, whose main purpose was to implement the principles of Agenda 21 in the Mediterranean region. It would also shortly be hosting a meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution, adopted in Barcelona, to be held in October 1999, and, within the framework of the priority action programme, was preparing a coastal zone management plan for the Maltese archipelago.

61. Owing to its size and geographical location, Malta was affected by desertification and land degradation. It had recently ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and organized a national awareness seminar on the issue in collaboration with the Convention secretariat. It would also formulate a national action plan and cooperate with other northern Mediterranean countries in that area. His delegation believed that environmental education and information and the participation of the public in decision making were key long-term tools for redressing environmental problems.

62. **Ms. Young-ju Oh** (Republic of Korea) said that being almost entirely dependent on imports for its domestic energy requirements, the Republic of Korea attached the highest

priority to energy conservation and the limitation of greenhouse gas emissions, not only from an environmental perspective but as a part of its long-term strategy for sustainable development and energy security.

63. Her delegation welcomed the decisions taken at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity and noted that since development of that treaty regime involved such areas as trade and tourism, it would be necessary to consider practical and substantial cooperation with the relevant international organizations. While her delegation supported the adoption of a biosafety protocol at the earliest possible date, it was concerned at the lack of consensus on several substantive issues, and hoped that States parties would make every effort to expedite the negotiation process.

64. Her delegation attached great importance to the close and cooperative relationship between the Convention to Combat Desertification and the other environmental conventions. Early ratification of the Convention by major signatories would be crucial in securing the financial resources needed for its successful implementation. The Republic of Korea was making every effort to speed its own ratification process. Finally, her delegation looked forward to the forthcoming special session to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

65. **Mr. Saenz Biolley** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Central American countries – Belize, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica – said that Central America contained more than 8 per cent of the world's biological diversity, including 33 ecoregions and 20,000 plant species. Panama alone had 925 species of birds and Guatemala, more than 250 species of mammals. With a territory of 511,000 square kilometres and a population of nearly 33 million, Central America was attempting to balance its economic development and the protection of its biological resources. In addition to integrating the Convention on Biological Diversity into their national legislation, the Central American Governments had signed the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development, with a view to preserving biodiversity through, *inter alia*, the development of ecological zones and protected areas, and had established the Central American Commission on Environment and Development and the Central American Council on Protected Areas. Each country had established a National Commission on Biological Diversity in order to develop strategies and carry out country studies on biodiversity. In addition, the Central American countries and Mexico had established a Central American biodiversity information system.

66. The number of protected areas in Central America had soared from 25 to 415 in just three decades; half of them had been designated within the past 12 years. By far the most important initiative to preserve biodiversity had been the establishment of the Programme for the Central American Biological Corridor by the seven Central American countries and Mexico in 1997. The corridor was a series of interconnected protected natural areas in which ecologically friendly production and soil use, investment in conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources were promoted. The corridor was being developed at the local, national and regional levels, largely with financing from the Global Environment Facility, and had gained international recognition. Examples of contributions to the corridor included the commitment by Honduras to maintain 10 protected areas along the Atlantic Coast; a Nicaraguan plan to protect biodiversity and to enable its indigenous population to use certain resources in a sustainable manner; an initiative by Belize and Mexico to safeguard the largest coral reef in the western hemisphere; a Guatemalan initiative to preserve its indigenous cultures' knowledge of biodiversity and its archaeological heritage; the consolidation and modernization of biodiversity research facilities in Costa Rica and its adoption of framework legislation on biodiversity; and the conservation of the flora and fauna resources of Darién in Panama.

67. The Central American countries had adopted economic measures to stimulate conservation and the sustainable use of biological resources. However, their efforts must be complemented by new as well as traditional forms of financing on the part of the international community. The biologically poorer countries of the North, in particular, must assume their responsibility towards the preservation of biodiversity in the biologically richer countries of the South.

68. **Mr. Arbel** (Israel) said that Israel had not fully understood the long-term effects of cultivating arid and semi-arid land and it provided an interesting case study of the synergies between the loss of biodiversity, desertification, deforestation and climate change. In Israel, the conversation of rangeland into irrigated croplands had resulted in desertification, which, in turn had led to a loss of plant and animal species and, subsequently, of topsoil and the potential for rehabilitating biodiversity. Such biodiversity losses had further aggravated desertification.

69. The current prediction was that there would be a reduction in soil moisture and aquifer recharge as a result of increased water evaporation. The loss of biodiversity and green areas had aggravated climate change and initiated a vicious cycle of desertification, global warming and further loss of biodiversity. However, unlike the climate system,

which could be restored by reducing emissions, or desertified land, which could be reclaimed by rehabilitation, once a plant or animal species was lost it was lost forever. Thus, the predicted warming of Israel could well result in the loss of drought-sensitive species and impair its ecosystem.

70. In Israel, the semi-arid region was the richest in flora and fauna. Semi-arid regions were most prone to desertification but, at the same time, their biodiversity could be crucial to rectifying the effects of climate change. Therefore, the natural habitats of semi-arid belts should be protected from both desertification and uncontrolled agricultural development. In the 1950s, Israel's first rime Minister had claimed: "If we don't conquer the desert, the desert will conquer us". Israel had learned that the cost of conquering the desert was the loss of biodiversity.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations A/C.2/53/SR.23

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Chairman: Mr. Asadi ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

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98-81844 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 93: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of and follow-up to major consensus agreements on development (*continued*)

(i) Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of the Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries (*continued*)

(ii) Implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (*continued*)

Draft resolution on implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (A/C.2/53/L.12)

1. **Mr. Hidayat** (Indonesia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/53/L.12 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the recent financial crisis had demonstrated the importance of the International Development Strategy. Some thought would have to be given to the preparation of a new strategy for the next decade. In that connection, the Secretary-General, in the analytical report that he was requested to submit, should highlight the areas that should receive greater attention in the strategy for the Fifth United Nations Development Decade.

(b) Integration of the economies in transition into the world economy (*continued*)

Draft resolution on integration of the economies in transition into the world economy (A/C.2/53/L.13)

2. **Mr. Reva** (Ukraine), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/53/L.13, said that the United States of America had become a sponsor. He hoped that the text would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 94: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/53/25, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/96, A/53/156–S/1998/78, A/53/165–S/1998/601, A/53/371–S/1998/848, A/53/416, A/53/425 and A/53/487)

(b) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*) (A/53/449)

(c) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/53/65–E/1998/5 and A/53/358)

(d) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/53/451)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (*continued*) (A/53/516)

Draft resolution on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon (A/C.2/53/L.11)

3. **Mr. Hapsoro** (Indonesia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/53/L.11 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the El Niño phenomenon was a recurrent and predictable phenomenon. He expressed satisfaction that the international community had strengthened its cooperation with the affected countries.

4. **Mr. Canuto** (Holy See) said that the question of protecting the global climate could be stated quite succinctly: could developing countries modernize their societies without endangering the environment? Half of all greenhouse gas emissions originated from the use of fossil fuels. The activities of 25 per cent of the world's population were responsible for 75 per cent of global emissions. It had formerly been assumed that the developing countries should follow the same development path as the developed countries, regardless of differences in resource availability, social structure, political orientation or historical background. That approach had not succeeded. It had also been thought that the economy was self-regulating and that an alarm system would sound when natural resources began to be depleted; that was not the case. The pursuit of individual interests, without regard for diminishing natural resources had led to unsustainable development. There was no magic formula and technology alone could not solve all problems.

5. The over-exploitation of natural resources had led to the degradation of the environment through desertification, deforestation, the depletion of the ozone layer, the eutrophication of lakes and streams, and the extinction of plant and animal species. Almost 20 years earlier, Pope John

Paul II had stressed that care must be taken in the application of advances in science and technology, and that it was not possible to interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations. Sixty per cent of the world's population lived in remote areas, with no access to conventional sources of energy. The only solution was to burn virgin forests.

6. After the first revolution, which saw the development of agriculture, and the industrial revolution, the time had come to begin a third revolution, based on the exchange of knowledge and information. In order for development to be sustainable, it was necessary to move away from the use of natural resources to the use of knowledge. The developing countries needed to industrialize and eradicate poverty, unemployment and illiteracy without compromising their future. Thus far, all attempts to solve those problems separately had failed. Environmental concerns should be viewed not as an additional problem but as a catalyst that would enable humanity to achieve all its goals.

7. **Mr. Özturk** (Turkey) said that his country had expressed the wish that reference to Turkey should be deleted from annexes I and II of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Although it was in general agreement with the spirit of the Convention, Turkey had not acceded to the Convention because it had been included in annexes I and II together with developed countries that had completed their industrialization, and economies in transition. Turkey's inclusion in those annexes entailed responsibilities that it was currently not in a position to undertake. Its anthropogenic emissions were one tenth the average of the countries listed in annex II, and its energy consumption was about one fifth the average of the countries members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and one fourth the average of the countries of the European Union. Its contribution to global warming was only a fraction of that of the countries listed in annex II. Although it was not a party to the Convention, Turkey was aware of its responsibilities. It had taken the necessary legislative steps to reduce its emission levels as envisaged for the countries listed in annex I. It continued to contribute to the Global Environment Facility, as called for in annex II, and provided significant financial aid to developing countries.

8. The matter of Turkey's exclusion from the annexes of the Framework Convention had been taken up at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Kyoto and at the meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation in Bonn; it would be further discussed at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties in Buenos Aires in November 1998.

9. Turkey considered that commitments should take due account of the specific circumstances and responsibilities of the parties concerned. Since Turkey was a much less important source of pollution than the other countries listed in the annexes, it requested that its inclusion in those annexes should be reconsidered.

10. **Ms. MacDonald** (New Zealand) said that sustainable development required a holistic approach and there was a need for greater linkage between environmental protection and economic and social development. The future of sustainable development was largely in the hands of local and national authorities; global solutions should be saved for global problems. While far away from major centres of population and pollution, New Zealand recognized the importance of being part of the solution for problems that had global effects.

11. New Zealand shared the concerns of the countries in its region and other countries vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. It regarded the Kyoto Protocol as a positive but incomplete achievement. The fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change offered an opportunity to resolve some issues left outstanding. Priority should be given to developing rules for emissions trading. Such trading should proceed on a liberal and open basis without such restrictions as quotas or ceilings that would introduce distortions into the market and impair its efficiency. It was important that the rules to be developed should focus on ways of making emissions trading practical and effective.

12. The recent South Pacific Forum meeting had emphasized the deep concern of its members about the impact of climate change. New Zealand had associated itself with the Forum Leaders statement on climate change (A/53/416, appendix II), in which the Forum stressed that the developed countries should take the lead in combating climate change and underscored the urgent need for wider global participation.

13. Her delegation welcomed the progress made at the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bratislava in May 1998 and was pleased that it had recognized the importance of cooperation with other processes and organizations. It was essential to avoid duplication of effort and to make use of the strengths of other entities.

14. The work of the Convention on Biological Diversity should be conducted in an efficient and transparent way that enabled smaller delegations to participate. Small island developing States were particularly vulnerable to such global phenomena as climate change and sea-level rise for which they bore little responsibility. It was up to the international community to ensure that their future was not jeopardized. In that context, New Zealand welcomed the initiatives scheduled for 1999 and the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. It hoped that the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly would provide a blueprint for the complete and effective implementation of the Programme of Action, and welcomed the role that the Committee on Sustainable Development had been given in helping to prepare for the special session.

15. **Mr. Koech** (Kenya) said that Kenya had prepared a national action plan to combat desertification, which was being implemented under the auspices of the National Environmental Secretariat. Desertification was a major concern to Kenya since about 80 per cent of its territory was affected by that phenomenon and some 10 million people lived in poverty because of the impact of drought. Kenya's long-term objective was to achieve sustainable development by means of poverty-alleviation, food-security and environment-conservation strategies. For that purpose, the authorities had to organize programmes that involved all the stakeholders and to create the necessary legal framework. In order to succeed, the National Action Plan would have to incorporate the contributions of Kenya's various socio-cultural groups.

16. As the programmes of the National Action Plan showed, while the Government was taking an active part in combating desertification, it was also supported by non-governmental organizations that worked at the grass-roots level and by donors and international organizations that provided financial and technical support. The Plan's steering committee included representatives of the Government, non-governmental organizations, universities and international organizations. It supported the National NGO Coordinating Committee on Desertification, which was made up of non-governmental organizations involved in desertification issues. The Plan also included general public-awareness programmes; it had reached many districts in Kenya and was currently providing assistance to local communities.

17. In spite of some difficulties, such as insufficient resources and inadequate technology, Kenya was now firmly committed to combating desertification. It called on the General Assembly to promote action to assist countries, particularly countries in Africa, in implementing regional plans of action. To that end, adequate resources, together with capacity-building programmes, should be made available to those countries.

18. **Mr. Ronneberg** (Marshall Islands), referring to the protection of global climate, said that his Government was actively supporting the efforts of the scientific community to find solutions to the problem of climate change. The industrialized countries should take stronger measures to cut their greenhouse-gas emissions; in that connection the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was entirely inadequate because the arbitrary concessions it granted were likely to undermine more extensive reduction efforts. A more scientific approach should be taken in determining which industrialized countries should reduce their emissions further.

19. Nationally, his Government had established a national climate change committee comprised of representatives from a number of ministries and from local businesses. That committee would propose appropriate action to advance the implementation of the Framework Convention. At the Buenos Aires Conference of the Parties to the Convention, the Marshall Islands would work closely with the Alliance of Small Island States to direct the application of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol towards concrete action.

20. With regard to small island developing States and the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, the Commission on Sustainable Development had noted with concern that the response by the international donor community had been very inadequate in comparison with the significant national and subregional efforts made. The Marshall Islands favoured convening the round table that would shortly bring together the small island developing States and the donor Governments and agencies. That initiative might assist those countries in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action. It would be helpful if the donor community made voluntary contributions that would allow small island States which were not United Nations Members to participate both in the round table and in the special session of the General Assembly that would in 1999 make an assessment of the progress made in the follow-up to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

21. On the question of biological diversity, the Marshall Islands and other Pacific island countries had made significant contributions to the discussions at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Bratislava. They had organized a preparatory workshop, with the support of several States and non-governmental

organizations, that had been instrumental in allowing them to present a unified position at the Conference.

22. The issue of biosafety was being hotly debated in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Many developing countries feared that they would become testing grounds for potentially dangerous new substances. A totally free trading regime for bioengineered products exposed those countries to serious risk. The Marshall Islands was currently drafting a set of rules to govern biosafety issues in the country, on which it would report to the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

23. Regarding desertification, the Marshall Islands had recently acceded to the Convention to Combat Desertification. The country had suffered a severe drought in 1997 and was trying to mitigate the short-term effects with technical and material assistance from Japan and the United States, although a long-term strategy would be required. The Marshall Islands looked forward to participating in the second session of the Conference of the Parties to that important Convention.

24. **Mr. U Win Aung** (Myanmar) said that biological diversity was not the sum of all ecosystems and species but represented the variability within and among them. It was consequently a vast domain. With human beings totally dependent upon the fauna and flora of the world for their survival, it was imperative to preserve biodiversity. Myanmar attached the utmost importance to the question. It had been one of the original signatories of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and was party to a number of agreements and conventions for the protection of the natural world. Furthermore, its traditions and culture were very respectful of all forms of life.

25. Currently, protected forests covered 2 per cent of the total land area of the country, but the long-term objective was to raise that to 10 per cent. Myanmar was very rich in animal and plant species, many still not identified. Its legislation provided various categories of protection for its fauna, and official forest reserves covered more than 100,000 square miles. Thanks to its experience over more than a century in forest management, it had successfully developed a system combining rational exploitation and the protection of biodiversity.

26. Nevertheless, a rich natural endowment was not enough, for it still had to be managed more systematically and scientifically. That would require regional, interregional and international cooperation with regard, in particular, to the management of activities to conserve biological diversity, the protection of migratory species, and the development of institutions and capabilities, especially in setting up a database information system. Myanmar was working closely on wildlife protection with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and various non-governmental organizations and, in the context of technical cooperation among developing countries, it had established relations with several Asian countries for the protection of forests. Those common activities facilitated the exchange of experiences and favoured the implementation of the commitments under the Convention.

27. His Government, a party to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification since 1997, had long been cognizant of the consequences of desertification, which affected Central Myanmar. As part of a reforestation project in the nine districts of the arid zone of the country, it had created plantations with the participation of the local population, who would be entitled to use the fuelwood that would be produced. The plantations should improve their living conditions, while halting soil erosion and improving climatic conditions. A project of that kind had been carried out in the Mount Popa region and was having a visible impact on both the climate and the well-being of the inhabitants. The reforestation project showed that political will on the part of the authorities together with the active participation of the rural people could produce miracles. Yet despite the resolve of the Government and the population, their means were limited, and assistance was needed, in funds, in technical know-how or in kind, to combat desertification more vigourously. Myanmar welcomed, in that connection, the forthcoming second session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to be held in Dakar.

28. **Mr. Sersale di Cerisano** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that his organization was resolved to contribute to the successful outcome of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. With a mandate to promote sustainable industrial development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) worked in several areas related to the environment, especially the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. It had facilitated the holding of a think-tank meeting on climate change organized recently by the Group of 77, and had organized an expert group meeting in Vienna in October 1998 on the Clean Development Mechanism and sustainable industrial development. The Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol dealt with issues that would have an impact on development cooperation and industrial investment, and thus on the policy guidelines of UNIDO, particularly with regard to the promotion of

technical innovations and the search for financing. Mindful of the crucial importance of climate change, and wishing to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to implement the provisions of the Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, UNIDO was streamlining its structure and technical capabilities, and it urged the developed countries to review their production and consumption patterns and to finance the transfer and adaptation of clean technologies.

29. The developing countries, whose importance to global industrial development was increasing, could play a decisive role in the negotiations on climate change. The Kyoto Protocol, which was aimed at the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases, was a milestone on the road to sustainable industrial development. In some areas, it provided for flexible mechanisms which could serve as a basis for cooperation; discussion should be centred on the directives to be implemented particularly with regard to technology transfer, new and additional resources, clean development mechanisms and the exchange of emission rights for annex B countries from a global standpoint, so as to move the negotiations forward. The implementation of the Protocol was essential, particularly in order to establish the basic rules for the financing of clean development mechanisms. Judging by the current trend in official development assistance and the implementation of the Kyoto mechanisms, it would probably be necessary to seek new financing sources for clean development mechanisms, such as the investment promoted by trade liberalization and the dynamism of the private sector, or, in the case of technology transfers leading to reduced emissions, the exchange of emission rights. That financing modality which was likely to become very important in the future, was currently the subject of a research project undertaken by UNIDO.

30. **Mr. Acemah** (Uganda) said that his country attached importance to the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Rome. The challenge of sustainable development was particularly rigorous in fragile ecosystems, such as the Sahelian region – whence the crucial importance of the Convention, which provided the basic framework. His delegation was concerned at the slow pace of efforts to establish the Global Mechanism, and hoped that the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank would honour their commitments in that area without delay. It was to be hoped that the international community would provide the Convention secretariat with the resources needed to discharge its mandate. His delegation welcomed the signing of the Headquarters Agreement between the United Nations and Germany, the host country, and hoped that the secretariat could move to Bonn at the beginning of 1999 as planned. His delegation further endorsed the establishment of a committee, which should be a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, to review the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

31. **Ms. Weill-Hallé** (International Fund for Agricultural Development) said that she would focus mainly on the efforts made by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to establish the Global Mechanism provided for in the Convention to Combat Desertification. Since combating desertification was within its mandate, IFAD had invested over $3 billion in local development and local capacity-building projects in arid regions. In terms of technical assistance, it had granted subsidies to meet the needs of small farmers in fragile ecosystems and had developed technologies likely to have a long-range impact (pest resistant species, improved water reclamation systems and low-cost soil and water protection measures). Following the devastating droughts that had ravaged sub-Saharan African countries in the early 1980s, IFAD had been the first international financial institution to draw up a special programme of assistance for those countries, for which over $700 million had been mobilized.

32. IFAD was convinced that combating desertification depended mainly on resource mobilization and effective planning, and that in addition, partnership was essential, particularly with countries affected by the scourge of desertification. Decisive steps had been taken towards the establishment of the Global Mechanism; in 1997, IFAD had been chosen by the Conference of the Parties to house the Global Mechanism. In 1998 its Executive Board had endorsed that decision. IFAD welcomed the successful outcome of the negotiations on modalities for cooperation with the Convention secretariat; a memorandum of understanding would be submitted during the second session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held at Dakar.

33. It should be recalled that at the outset the Global Mechanism had been envisaged, not as a central financing body, but as the hub of a dynamic network of partners, each making a specific contribution to combating desertification. In that spirit, the Conference of the Parties had approved the inter-institutional cooperation agreement and IFAD, UNDP and the World Bank had established a committee to facilitate the functioning of the Global Mechanism, the membership of which had been enlarged. By the end of 1998 the Facilitation Committee would have held three meetings,

which would have enabled it to define its main functions, the modalities for cooperation between it and the Global Mechanism and its own method of functioning, which would be as a consultative body outside the structure of the Global Mechanism, to be called into action as needed and authorized to establish working groups on specific questions.

34. In terms of partnership, IFAD worked in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (preparation and co-financing of investment projects in arid regions), UNDP (requests for support services for country teams) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (memorandum of understanding on joint initiatives in the framework of the Convention). It also maintained close ties with the private sector and with civil society. In June 1998 it had sponsored a workshop held in the United States Congress which had provided an opportunity for further consideration of the Global Mechanism in the context of rural poverty alleviation. IFAD was also working with the secretariat of the Conference of the Parties and with a group of non-governmental organizations to raise global awareness of the problem of desertification.

35. With regard to the organization of the Global Mechanism, the establishment of a programme execution database on the financial needs of developing countries affected by desertification was already well advanced. Thanks to generous contributions from Germany and Sweden, it had been possible to recruit the Director-General of the Mechanism. The recruitment of the other core staff members should take place at the beginning of 1999. IFAD was convinced of the essential contribution that the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Global Mechanism would make to the fight against poverty and environmental degradation, and deeply appreciated the contribution that its members and partners in the United Nations system and civil society were making to the establishment of the Global Mechanism.

36. **Mr. Kiriella** (Sri Lanka) said that, although significant developments had taken place with regard to the environment and sustainable development, there was still a long way to go to achieve the targets that had been set. The Second Committee should review the progress made in implementing Agenda 21 and the programme adopted at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, as well as the progress made in implementing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

37. In his report on United Nations reform, the Secretary-General had attached great importance to the environment, considering that it had a major bearing on development activities of the United Nations system, and had proposed strengthening and restructuring the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements. He looked forward to the early implementation of the proposed reforms.

38. While environmental degradation had become a major obstacle to the achievement of sustainable development, it was encouraging that positive developments had taken place in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and UNEP as a result of the decisions taken at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. In partnership with the various United Nations programmes and organizations dealing with the environment, both the Commission and UNEP should continue to serve as key mechanisms of industrial cooperation in the field of sustainable development.

39. Despite the difficulties faced by his country, the Government was endeavouring to implement Agenda 21 and had already made some progress in addressing the problems of poverty and unemployment. In that context, the sixth World Congress of environmental journalists had been held in Colombo; environmental journalists played a crucial role in focusing attention on environmental issues and in finding solutions to environmental problems.

40. Sri Lanka was committed to protecting its biodiversity and in 1995 had celebrated its first national biodiversity day with the opening of a permanent biodiversity exhibition and the release of a biodiversity newsletter. It was also establishing national plans in various fields such as biodiversity, forestry, fisheries, coastal conservation and the conservation of medicinal plants.

41. The National Environmental Act dated back to 1982. The Ministry of the Environment had adopted an integrated approach to conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources as part of a highly detailed action plan prepared in conjunction with various governmental agencies and the associated sector. The plan included, *inter alia*, the implementation of the Conventions adopted at the Rio Conference and significant training and awareness-raising activities, in particular for young people and in the field of biodiversity. The Ministry of the Environment had also established inter-agency coordinating committees to implement those Conventions and provide sector-specific environmental advocacy.

42. His Government had focused on improving the capacity of non-governmental organizations and the private

sector to share the responsibility of managing the environment. In 1995, it had launched a poverty alleviation programme, covering one third of the country's population, which consisted in ensuring a minimum income through a direct income transfer.

43. Non-governmental organizations, business, industry and the Government were engaged in a consultative process aimed at achieving the targets set in Agenda 21 and other Rio agreements. A policy decision had also been taken to establish a National Council for Sustainable Development in order to encourage broad participation of all the relevant groups in the decision-making process and in the implementation of measures towards sustainable development.

44. In conclusion, he appealed to international donor agencies and the developed countries to support the sustainable development activities which the developing countries, despite the great difficulties which they faced, were undertaking.

45. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal), referring to the question of combating desertification, said that, with the first session of the Conference of the Parties, held in Rome in 1997, the Convention on Desertification had entered a decisive phase in its implementation and in the institutional follow-up to its activities. In deciding to host the second session of the Conference of the Parties, which was scheduled to take place in the near future in Dakar, his Government sought to contribute to the consolidation of the gains achieved in Rome. That decision also demonstrated his country's wish to assume its share of the joint responsibility for combating desertification.

46. In view of their dramatic and global consequences, desertification and drought demanded decisive joint action. In that connection, he emphasized that all the instruments resulting from the Rio process should receive equal treatment since they were of equal significance in the quest for sustainable development.

47. Much remained to be done to establish a solid foundation for the Convention, and it was a matter of urgency to find a satisfactory solution to questions which had not been resolved at the Conference of the Parties in Rome. In that connection, he referred to the pending articles of the rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties, the mechanism for assessing the implementation of the Convention, the work programme of the Committee on Science and Technology, the process of defining benchmarks and indicators, the gathering of data on traditional knowledge and practices and the use of such data for the purposes of the Convention, the regional implementation annex for the countries of the eastern and central European region and, above all, the entry into operation of the Global Mechanism. The latter raised the fundamental question of the mobilization of resources. In that connection, his delegation believed that the budget of the Convention secretariat for the biennium 1998–1999, amounting to $6 million, was clearly insufficient to finance the activities to be carried out under the Convention. The transfer of environmentally sound technologies and the exchange of experience in combating desertification were also effective ways of implementing the Convention.

48. The full achievement of the objectives of the Convention required the implementation of bold national policies covering, on the one hand, sôcio-economic and environmental concerns through the rational management of resources, and, on the other hand, the fight against poverty and the improvement of agricultural methods. Particular attention should be paid to the potential of new and renewable sources of energy in combating deforestation. In that regard, it would be useful to consider the extent to which activities under the Convention could be linked with advocacy for the World Solar Programme which had recently been adopted by the General Assembly. It was by addressing the deep-rooted causes of desertification that it would be possible to meet the challenge of sustainable development.

49. **Mr. Staehelin** (Observer for Switzerland) said that his country attached great importance to the three international conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification which had been adopted as part of the Rio process, as they set forth legally binding commitments in key areas of environmental protection. It was essential to promote the universal ratification of those Conventions and to ensure that they were progressively strengthened.

50. Concerning the problem of climate change, the calculated targets set in the Kyoto Protocol for the limitation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by the industrialized countries were inadequate. It was therefore essential, at the fourth Conference of the Parties, scheduled to be held in Buenos Aires, to adopt a work plan with deadlines. Furthermore, care should be taken to ensure that the procedures for using flexible mechanisms and greenhouse gas wells would not jeopardize the targets set in the Kyoto Protocol.

51. Switzerland planned to ratify and faithfully implement the Kyoto Protocol at the same time as its partners in the industrialized countries. The Parliament was currently considering a bill proposing that CO^2 emissions should be reduced 10 per cent from 1990 levels by 2010.

52. With regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the outcome of the most recent Conference of the Parties, held in Bratislava, represented notable progress. However, the Convention must have a greater impact in such areas as agriculture, forestry, economic policy, biological safety, access to genetic resources and the transfer of technology. In particular, its provisions on access to genetic resources and their equitable distribution must be given more practical expression. The solutions arrived at should be acceptable for both the developing and the industrialized countries. Switzerland actively supported the elaboration of an international protocol on the prevention of biotechnological risk and hoped that an effective instrument would be adopted that would guarantee that international trade in genetically modified living organisms would be conducted in complete safety.

53. On the question of combating desertification, he said that Switzerland had participated actively in the drafting of the Convention on the subject and had allocated a significant amount of bilateral aid to combat that scourge. It would participate actively in the Conference of the Parties to be held in Dakar, which should establish the institutional framework for cooperation and the programme of work for the coming years. It attached particular importance to the adoption of the memorandum of understanding between the Conference of the Parties and IFAD regarding the Global Mechanism, which should facilitate the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention. It would also be desirable if the arrangements concerning cooperation between the Convention secretariat and the Global Mechanism ensured that their respective activities were complementary.

54. Given the increasingly complex nature of the environmental conventions, each of them must develop links not only with the other conventions but also with the international institutions which had specialized experience and knowledge in related fields. From that perspective, Switzerland welcomed the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. It supported all the efforts that had been made to strengthen the coordinating role of UNEP in order to create greater synergy between the activities undertaken under the various conventions and those of the national and international institutions in the field of environment and sustainable development. In conclusion, he reiterated Switzerland's great interest in the proclamation of the year 2002 as the International Year of Mountains and said it intended to participate actively in the preparations for the Year.

55. **Ms. Khan-Cummings** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that, in 1994 at Barbados, the international community had adopted a Programme of Action that was intended to complement chapter 17 of Agenda 21 regarding small island developing States. The Programme of Action contained binding commitments in the areas of climate change and biodiversity which addressed the special conditions and vulnerability of those countries.

56. As part of its multi-year work programme, the Commission on Sustainable Development had been addressing the 14 priority areas of the Barbados Programme of Action. During the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly planned for 1999 on the implementation of the Programme of Action, her delegation hoped that the Commission would focus on expected outcomes in order to accelerate implementation. The preparatory work being done by the Small Island Developing States Unit, in cooperation with UNDP, ECLAC and other agencies with a view to the convening of a donor conference in February 1999 was encouraging. In Trinidad and Tobago consultations were ongoing with the various ministries responsible for the implementation of the Programme of Action with a view to the early submission of a portfolio of projects. It was to be hoped that the donor conference would be successful and that the donor community would make firm commitments.

57. The report of the Secretary-General on plans and projects implemented in small island developing States (A/53/358) gave a good idea of the action taken, although it was less than complete. The areas which had attracted the most attention were climate change, biodiversity and freshwater resources. There was a certain degree of overlap, as the Global Environment Facility, UNEP and UNDP had reported on the same projects. A reporting mechanism should be developed which would give a clear indication of the origin of funding for the various projects.

58. The small island developing States must re-examine their priorities in keeping with their national objectives for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. In that way, the impact of projects relating to the implementation of the Programme on sustainable development could be measured more easily. For example, those countries should focus on science and technology. Work must also continue on the development of a vulnerability index for small island developing States and data must be compiled for a more comprehensive assessment of their ecological vulnerability.

59. The issue of financial resources was crucial for the economies of small States. The financial institutions must provide them with the necessary funds to deal with a full range of priority areas at the national level, and bilateral and

multilateral donors must take their special situation into account.

60. **Mr. Kamal** (Pakistan), referring to the protection of the global climate, said that there had been considerable progress in establishing normative regimes to address the issue of climate change. The Kyoto Protocol and the Framework Convention on Climate Change were significant steps in that regard. However, little or no progress had been achieved in curbing emissions of greenhouse gases, which were a major cause of climate change. It was unfair to expect the developing countries, which had neither the technology nor the resources, to take the first step; it was for the developed countries to take the lead. His delegation hoped that those critical issues would be discussed in earnest at the forthcoming meeting of the Convention's subsidiary bodies in Buenos Aires.

61. Turning to the implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, he said that those countries' own efforts to achieve sustainable development must be supported by the international community, in particular through financial assistance.

62. On the issue of climate change, the small island developing States depended to a large degree on global action to stop global warming, which posed a serious threat to their existence. In the meantime, the international community must help them to build up their capacities to cope with the impact of climate change and sea-level rise by providing them with technical and financial assistance.

63. Another crucial issue for those States was the development of a vulnerability index which took into account all the relevant variables. There was a need for proper understanding of the complexity of the concept of vulnerability. Work should continue on the building of a comprehensive index, taking into account a number of factors such as biodiversity, climate change and sea-level rise.

64. With respect to combating desertification, which was as critical to the African countries as the issue of climate change was to the small island developing States, it should be noted that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification could not be implemented without adequate resources and appropriate technologies. In order to increase the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms for resource generation, the international community should support the Global Mechanism. It was widely recognized that poverty eradication was an effective strategy for combating desertification and promoting sustainable development. Africa should be provided with sufficient resources to implement that strategy.

65. To ensure effective implementation of the Convention, a committee should be established for the periodic review of progress on the implementation of the Convention, because the existing review bodies had clearly contributed to accelerating the implementation of other instruments.

66. Since the adoption of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, the total number of legal instruments dealing with environment and sustainable development had increased tremendously. However, environmental degradation continued unabated, and the goals of sustainable development remained elusive. Developing countries should therefore be given adequate financial resources and appropriate technologies to enable them to help realize the objectives of Agenda 21.

67. **Mr. Štefánek** (Slovakia) said that the international community had been concerned about the conservation of biological diversity only in recent years, although many species had been threatened for a long time. It was only in 1992 that the international community had adopted a legally binding instrument on that issue.

68. Slovakia had hosted the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bratislava a few months earlier. The meeting had marked the transition from the start-up phase to a long-term plan of action and had developed new guidelines for work programmes in several key ecosystems. One of the priorities of the meeting had been the adoption of a work programme focusing on the elaboration of the first global assessment of the biodiversity of inland water ecosystems in cooperation with the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat.

69. The Conference of the Parties had decided that a Protocol on Biosafety would be adopted at the special session of the Conference in 1999. The adoption of the Protocol was of particular importance to humankind in the field of biotechnology and genetically modified organisms. The Conference had also reaffirmed the utmost importance of developing cooperation with the United Nations and with the other relevant environmental conventions, as well as with the World Trade Organization, especially within the framework of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

70. His delegation welcomed the outcome of negotiations on replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, which had resulted in pledges of $2.75 billion.

71. Since the Slovak Republic had been elected president of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, it still had an important role to play until the fifth meeting of the Conference in 2000. It hoped that fruitful cooperation would be established with all the stakeholders who wished to participate in the implementation of planned activities in the area of biodiversity.

72. **Mr. Ingolfsson** (Iceland) welcomed the outcome of the Kyoto Conference, which was an important step towards reducing the threat caused by global warming. The impending fourth session of the Conference of the Parties in Buenos Aires offered an opportunity to finalize some of the outstanding issues and to make progress on others.

73. In the decision concerning the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, it was stated that the Buenos Aires Conference of the Parties would consider suitable methodologies to address the situation of parties included in Annex B. Iceland had proposed a solution to that problem at the meeting of the subsidiary bodies of the Convention in Bonn a few months earlier. It had circulated a draft decision to all parties and wished to urge that the proposal should be given careful consideration so that the matter could be finalized in Buenos Aires.

74. It was imperative that meaningful progress should be made at the next session of the Conference of the Parties with regard to the development of flexibility mechanisms, because such mechanisms offered the most cost-effective means of combating climate change.

75. In order to facilitate consensus-building with respect to the rules and modalities concerning emissions trading, joint implementation and the clean development mechanism, Iceland had participated in conceptual work conducted by a group of nations which had resulted in the presentation of a discussion paper at the Bonn meeting, which should facilitate consensus.

76. The Kyoto Protocol recognized carbon sequestration as an important means of combating climate change. Sink enhancement was, however, limited to afforestation. Iceland had therefore proposed that the revegetation of degraded land should be recognized as sink enhancement. Restoration of degraded land was also important in the context of the Convention to Combat Desertification. It would therefore be useful for the objectives of the two conventions to include that activity in the list of activities aimed at enhancing carbon uptake by sinks.

77. His delegation welcomed the results of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held recently in Bratislava. It welcomed, in particular, the adoption of the decision on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biological diversity. Icelanders were very conscious of the importance of that issue, because such resources constituted the single largest source of protein and represented a crucial part of the earth's ecosystem.

78. Iceland had taken an active part in the development of the programme of work on that issue. It wished to stress, in that regard, that it was imperative to focus efforts on promoting the sustainable management of biological diversity of marine living resources, in full compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Species, taking into account the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. A decision would also have to be taken as to which of the activities should be carried out at the global level and which should be implemented at the regional or national level. In that context, priority should be given to the creation and strengthening of regional scientific centres of excellence on marine and coastal ecosystems in order to provide guidance to regional and national managers. That endeavour of cooperation with a view to the conservation and sustainable management of marine and coastal biological diversity must remain transparent. Towards that end, national experts should undertake peer reviews.

79. Iceland recognized the importance of combating desertification, a phenomenon which had the most direct impact on the living conditions, poverty and food security of people. Therefore the Convention adopted on that issue was about the survival of present generations and securing a better life for future generations. The strong link between land degradation and living conditions had been demonstrated in his own country, which was experiencing the impact of large-scale erosion and loss of vegetation cover. Desertification and rangeland degradation, stemming particularly from deforestation and overgrazing, had resulted in the loss of half of the soil cover in Iceland.

80. The processes leading to desertification in different climatic regions of the world were strikingly similar. Strengthened cooperation among such regions could promote the implementation of the Convention, and its evaluation could be enhanced through broad-based scientific input.

81. The implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification must not be seen in isolation from that of other instruments adopted on the environment. In particular,

the principles incorporated in the Convention on Biological Diversity must be kept in mind. The important linkage with the Framework Convention on Climate Change must also be recognized.

82. **Mr. Ferjančič** (Slovenia) said that sustainable development necessitated dealing with its environmental component simultaneously with its social and economic components, and called for a radical change in production and consumption patterns.

83. Various international institutions already dealt with specific aspects of sustainable development. For its part, Slovenia had decided to focus its activities on particular initiatives and conventions. As an alpine country, it attached particular importance to the implementation of the Alpine Convention on the Protection of the Mountains and to questions concerning preservation of mountain areas in general.

84. Although Slovenia was still eligible for Global Environment Facility grants it had decided, in view of the extreme importance of that mechanism, to contribute to the second replenishment of its Trust Fund. Slovenia had recently signed the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, after first preparing a detailed programme for its implementation. The activities provided for under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol were of vital importance for small island developing States, since they were affected most dramatically by the consequences of climate change. For that reason, their needs had to be given high priority. Slovenia would continue its work in that area.

85. The problem of desertification was not just a matter for a few regions of the world: in the near future, mitigation of the effects of drought could become a priority even for States that were currently unaffected by that phenomenon. It was important to take preventive action before being forced to react.

86. One of the obvious priorities for Slovenia was the preservation of biological diversity. The implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity was proceeding apace. In the context of sustainable development, Slovenia shared the view that the international community should accord special attention to the most fragile ecosystems, such as mountain areas. Therefore, it supported the proposal that the year 2000 should be proclaimed the International Year of Mountains.

87. **Mr. Al-Banay** (Kuwait) said that his country accorded particular importance to the environment in the context of development policy. Environmental issues were addressed by a number of national and regional bodies. In addition, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), of which Kuwait was currently President, had adopted two important documents at its eighteenth session held in Kuwait in 1997. The documents outlined a framework agreement on waste management, providing for the promulgation of legislation aimed at rationalizing production, storage, transport and treatment of waste and at establishing a unified system for the protection of wild fauna and flora in the member States.

88. On the occasion of the International Year of the Ocean, his delegation wished to draw attention to the fact that Iraq's aggression against Kuwait in 1990 had had catastrophic consequences for the marine environment of Kuwait and the Gulf. Several ships lay on the sea floor in the northern part of the Gulf. The salvage operation, which would be paid for by the States members of the GCC, would cost some tens of millions of dollars and represented a pollution risk, because many of the vessels were full of crude oil. The GCC's Director for the protection of the environment had confirmed that by the time the coalition forces arrived in 1991, between 2.5 and 3 million barrels of crude oil a day were leaking into the waters of the Gulf from the 700 wells to which Iraq had set fire. Huge quantities of oil had also been dumped on agricultural land, leaving it uncultivable for decades to come. In addition, landmines had been planted on Kuwaiti territory, claiming hundreds of innocent civilian victims. Kuwait wished to express its gratitude to the United Nations and the specialized agencies for their work in assessing the impact of that ecological catastrophe and identifying measures to remedy it and restore the environmental situation.

89. **Ms. Corado** (Guatemala) said that her country, which was a State party to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and to the Kyoto Protocol as well as a member of the regional body on climate change established by the Central American States in 1993, had created a national council on climate change with responsibility for guaranteeing protection of the climate and promoting measures to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions. That body had launched a number of initiatives, including the drawing up of an inventory of greenhouse gases, an analysis of climate protection measures and the elaboration of a plan of action to combat climate change.

90. Her Government had also set up a technical office whose task was to canvass support from potential investors in developed countries for greenhouse gas reduction projects to be carried out in Guatemala. The office was currently negotiating a number of projects in the areas of energy and forestry.

91. It was important to implement the Kyoto Protocol. To that end, Guatemala would participate actively in the fourth Conference of the States parties to be held in Buenos Aires. The negotiations should not rule out any agro-forestry system in discussion of the use of soil as a carbon sink. For its part, Guatemala would not make any commitments without having first evaluated their social and economic impact. With regard to the Clean Development Mechanism, the joint implementation approach should be used and current projects should be included. The Mechanism should have a simple, functional structure and a specific mandate. In order to measure and monitor climate change, existing institutions needed to be strengthened through the provision of appropriate resources, training of local personnel and technology transfer.

92. **Mr. Andjaba** (Namibia) said that his country attached great importance to the question of drought and desertification, since it consisted for the most part of arid lands, and its variable climate and low levels of rainfall often resulted in severe drought. The natural process of desertification was accelerated by other problems, such as unviable agricultural practices and generalized poverty among the rural population. Rapid population growth further exacerbated the pressures on the environment, since most Namibians depended on natural resources, particularly agricultural land, in order to meet their needs.

93. Some 143 States had already ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification. It was significant that 51 out of 52 African States, including Namibia, were among the States parties, together with all the member States of the European Union.

94. His delegation noted with satisfaction the progress made in the negotiations regarding the signing of the Headquarters Agreement between the Government of Germany and the Secretary-General, and regarding the Global Mechanism. However, the Convention could be fully implemented only if the countries seriously affected by drought and desertification received the necessary assistance, especially with respect to capacity-building, the training of personnel involved in land management, and the transfer of appropriate technologies. At the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the Conference in Senegal, the States Parties would need to devote much attention to the implementation of the Convention; consideration of the interlinkages between the Convention on Desertification and the Framework Convention on Climate Change was also an interesting idea that would be worth pursuing.

95. **Mr. Azaiez** (Tunisia) noted that the international community was showing greater interest in the problem of desertification, as was apparent from the success of the first session of the Conference of the Parties, held in Rome in 1997. There was reason for satisfaction at the decisions taken on that occasion, particularly with respect to the functions of the Global Mechanism and the approach that had been adopted to the task of mobilizing financial resources. The selection of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to house the Global Mechanism should be satisfactory in terms of the interests of the States Parties to the Convention. The support of UNDP and the World Bank also augured well for the attainment of the Convention's objectives as set by the international community.

96. It was to be hoped that at the second session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Dakar in 1998, the participants would adopt the memorandum of understanding linking the Conference to IFAD. The participants would also consider the report on the Global Mechanism's activities and would be able, on the same occasion, to formulate guidelines to direct its work.

97. At the session in Dakar, the Parties would also have an opportunity of examining the cooperation and complementarity between the Convention on Desertification and the other two Conventions that had been born of the Rio Conference. It was essential for that session to produce a definitive agreement, so that the institutions of the Convention could be established and become operational immediately.

98. With respect to international cooperation for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention on Desertification, it was gratifying to observe that growing numbers of States had ratified the Convention and that the developed countries were showing interest in it. Those countries, however, should honour their commitments towards the countries of the South by mobilizing additional financial resources, facilitating transfers of technology and know-how, and helping the developing States Parties affected by desertification to apply their own strategies for mitigating the impact of drought.

99. Where regional and subregional cooperation between developing countries to combat desertification was concerned, the African regional preparatory meeting for the second session of the Conference of the Parties would shortly be taking place in Tunis; at that meeting the participants would devote their efforts to the formulation of national programmes, consideration of the prospects for subregional cooperation, and the preparation of a regional

action programme to combat desertification. They would also consider traditional technologies, knowledge and practices used in that context.

100. Tunisia would also be hosting a research and development seminar on arid-land farming and the effort to combat desertification, which would be attended by North African and West African States and research bodies. The participants would consider means of combating the scourge of desertification and would compare notes on their experience with it.

101. At the national level, the efforts that Tunisia had been making for the past 30 years had resulted in a more accurate perception of the problem of desertification, greater awareness of the mechanisms of erosion and desertification, and a better understanding of how to combat those phenomena in ways that were socially acceptable and economically viable. The problem of desertification was so complex, however, that efforts to date had not succeeded in checking its insidious advance.

102. Tunisia was endeavouring to preserve the environment in accordance with its commitments under Agenda 21. The task of the developing countries could be successfully completed only within a common framework embracing all components of the international community.

103. **Ms. Wang Yinxia** (China) said that the coming into force of the Framework Convention on Climate Change had marked an important step forward in the international community's campaign against that phenomenon. The countries that were responsible for the current environmental situation should take immediate action to mitigate the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment.

104. Although the Kyoto Protocol was incomplete in many respects, it had established a timetable for the developed countries, which were primarily responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases between 2008 and 2012. It was neither fair nor realistic to expect the developing countries to undertake such an arduous task when their main concern was to develop their economies and meet the fundamental needs of their peoples.

105. China, although a developing country, had nonetheless adopted measures aimed at alleviating the environmental situation. Among other things, it had taken action to control its population growth, develop its renewable energy sources in order to reduce coal consumption, enhance energy efficiency, carry out reforestation projects and develop organic farming.

106. China was not in favour of the hasty adoption of an approach to development based on non-polluting technologies, and emphasized that such an approach should be considered only insofar as it served to supplement measures taken by the developing countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

107. China was pleased to note that since the entry into force of the Convention to Combat Desertification, which was the first step in the implementation of Agenda 21, there had been more international cooperation in that area. Not only was such cooperation essential for the countries affected by desertification, it was also in the long-term interests of all countries. Accordingly, it was to be hoped that the developed countries which were Parties to the Convention would provide the affected countries with the necessary technical and financial assistance and live up to the commitments they had made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

108. In recent years, China had introduced amendments to its domestic law relating to forests, grasslands, and the preservation of soils and drainage basins, and had also drafted legislation aimed at combating desertification. It had established an executive committee entrusted with the task of implementing the Convention, prepared a national action plan, and opened a research centre and a training and monitoring centre. A ministerial conference on the implementation of the Convention in Asia had been held in Beijing in 1997 and had concluded with the Beijing Declaration.

109. The solution to the environmental problems of small island developing States, which were seldom of their own making, was to be worked out within the framework of international cooperation in the area of the environment and development, and thus called for the support of the international community as a whole. China would participate actively in both the preparatory work for and the special session of the General Assembly that was to consider the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which had produced the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. China hoped that at the next meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development progress would be made with the development of a vulnerability index for those States.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.